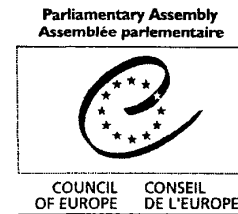


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Discrimination against women and girls in sport

Report
Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Rapporteur: Mrs Manuela Aguiar, Portugal, Group of the European People's Party

Summary

Women suffer frequent discrimination in their access to, and practice of, both amateur and professional sport – discrimination which is contrary to Council of Europe principles. This discrimination manifests itself in the persistence of stereotyping, the lack of a back-up and support structure for sportswomen and for girls who show potential in their sport, the difficulty of reconciling work/sport and family life, the problem of reintegrating into the world of work, inadequate media coverage of women's sport and the limited nature of private funding.

The Parliamentary Assembly should call on the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to work out a "European Strategy for Women and Sport" which should, in particular, encourage women and girls to take part in sport from their schooldays onwards and all their lives, promote gender mainstreaming in public policy concerning sport, support women's sport and women's participation in top-level sport, favour women playing a greater part in sport's ruling bodies and encourage better media coverage of women's sport.

I. Draft recommendation

1. Women suffer frequent discrimination in their access to, and practice of, both amateur and professional sport. This discrimination manifests itself in the persistence of stereotyping, the lack of a back-up and support structure for sportswomen and for girls who show potential in their sport, the difficulty of reconciling work/sport and family life, the problem of reintegrating into the world of work, inadequate media coverage of women's sport and the limited nature of private funding.
2. The lack of women on sport's ruling bodies constitutes a particular obstacle to the achievement of equality between women and men in sports activities. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the International Olympic Committee, women's participation in ruling bodies remains marginal in most Council of Europe member states.
3. This clearly constitutes a discrimination against women and girls which is contrary to the principles of the Council of Europe. In fact, the European Sports Charter, adopted by the Council of Europe in 1992 and revised in 2001, guarantees the promotion of the practice of sport for all parts of the population (Article 6) and expressly mentions the prohibition of discrimination (Article 4). In its first Article it lays down certain principles, among them the aim "to enable every individual to participate in sport" and "to protect and develop the moral and ethical bases of sport, and the human dignity and safety of those involved in sport".
4. Moreover, the European Ministers responsible for Sport, when they met in Budapest at their 10th Conference on 14 and 15 October 2004, emphasised that the particular role played by the Council of Europe in the realm of pan-European co-operation relating to sport was linked to the cardinal values of the Council of Europe (human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law). The combating of discrimination against women and girls in sports activities is part of these efforts to achieve equality between women and men and requires that effective measures be taken.
5. The Parliamentary Assembly therefore calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
 - i. instruct the competent intergovernmental committee to make an in-depth study of national sport policies and their impact on women's and girls' participation in sports activities and work out a "European Strategy for Women and Sport", which should ensure :
 - a. that physical education is accorded more importance in school and that women and girls are encouraged to take part in sport from their schooldays onwards, while respecting the principle of co-education;
 - b. that the responsible officials in the departments of sport, education and health are implicated in awareness-raising and information campaigns on the necessity of practising sport, in particular for women of all ages, including handicapped women;
 - c. that gender is taken into consideration in the definition of public action to promote sport (gender mainstreaming) and in the allocation of funds intended for sports activities (gender budgeting);
 - d. that violence, racism, sexual harassment and abuse, as well as doping, are fought against in sport and amongst spectators;
 - e. that action is taken to promote women's sport, particularly in respect of highly popular sports;
 - f. support for women's participation in top-level sport;
 - g. equal treatment for women and men in terms of pay, prize-money and bonuses derived from professional sport;
 - h. that women play a greater part in sport's ruling bodies;
 - i. that gender-specific statistics are collected relating to the granting of funds and the practice of sport, enabling the impact on women and men of sport promotion policies to be gauged;

- j. increased media coverage of the sports played by women and athlete representation more in conformity with the spirit of sport;
- ii. organise a European ministerial conference to launch this Strategy.

II. Introductory memorandum by the rapporteur, Mrs Aguiar

A. Introduction

1. Sport is beneficial to all, and at every level. It improves health and self-confidence through greater awareness of one's body. It is also a way of learning how to show solidarity and how to excel oneself.

2. This is why, in 1992, Article 1 of the European Sports Charter laid down certain principles, among them the aim "to enable every individual to participate in sport" and "to protect and develop the moral and ethical bases of sport, and the human dignity and safety of those involved in sport". Article 4 expressly mentions the prohibition of discrimination, while Article 6 guarantees promotion of the practice of sport for all parts of the population, which of course include women.

3. A number of measures have already been taken in application of the Charter, but as this report will show, women still suffer from discrimination not only preventing them from engaging harmoniously in sports activities or making a living from them, but also obstructing their access to posts of responsibility, in view of the structural or cultural difficulties encountered. The necessary conclusions must be drawn from this, and a start be made as soon as possible to changing this situation.

4. In the absence of specific, rigorously collected data relating to women's and girls' sports activities in the Council of Europe area, the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men sent a questionnaire to member states' national delegations (and to the permanent delegations of observer states) on 20 September 2004, so as to collect the requisite information.

5. As of 8 February 2005, 26 (of the 46) member states and one observer state (of the five) had replied to the questionnaire. The replies received to date, and on which I have based the analysis below, have been included in document AS/Ega/Inf (2005) 1¹. I should like to thank all the countries which have responded for their clear and pertinent replies, which have given me a greater awareness of the difficulties connected with equality between women and men where sports activities are concerned. A symptomatic fact which should be noted is that not all delegations had gender-specific figures available to them.

B. Promoting involvement in top-level sport

The Olympic Games – encouraging developments

6. The Olympics, an international competition on a large scale, are particularly representative in this respect: the number of women taking part in the Olympic Games has been growing steadily since they first took part in 1900, but inequality remains. 38.2% of the participants in the 2000 Games in Sydney were women, taking part in approximately 44% of the competitions². In the 2004 Athens Games, 40.6 % of the 10 864 participants were women. Moreover, since 1991, any new sport wishing to be included on the Olympic programme has had to make provision for women's events³.

7. So, while real equality in competition is drawing closer, the number of women in back-up teams remains limited. Taking the Sydney Games as an example again, only 8% of the members of technical teams were women, with the corresponding figure in medical teams being 4%. Only one team manager was a woman, compared with 25 men.

8. Yet the Modern Olympic Games symbolise a universal conception of sport within which women and men take part on a balanced basis⁴. The Assembly points in this respect to the resolution adopted by it in 1996 opposing the holding of women-only games⁵. In some countries, religion can in practice hinder women's access to sport, particularly as a result of rules on what women may wear. This is particularly obvious in Iran, where women have quite simply been forbidden to take part in the Olympic Games because they are not allowed to wear shorts in public. Women's games nevertheless took place in Iran in

¹ Available from the Secretariat of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

² Two sports in the 2004 Athens Olympics were for men only: boxing and baseball. Only women took part in softball (similar to baseball, but with a larger, softer ball), rhythmic gymnastics and synchronised swimming (Sources : http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_206.pdf and http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_668.pdf).

³ Sources: http://www.olympic.org/en/organisation/missions/women/games_en.asp.

⁴ It should be recalled that the Olympic Games used to be a man's privilege in Ancient Greece. Women started participate in the Olympic Games at the Games of the II Olympiad in Paris, in 1900. http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/index_uk.asp.

⁵ Resolution 1092 (1996) on discrimination against women in the field of sport and more particularly in the Olympic Games.

1997. In December 2001, the third "Muslim Women's Games" were held, with the participation of 795 athletes from 23 different countries, including Azerbaijan, which at the time was already a member of the Council of Europe⁶. The fourth games are scheduled to take place in Iran in September 2005.

9. Paradoxically, this situation enables Iran to have the highest percentage of female sports coaches in the world. And Iranian women are allowed to take part in international competitions in such disciplines as shooting, skiing, judo, and so on.

Maintaining elite women's sport for the long term

10. Women's participation in top-level sport is hindered by many obstacles, including a lack of appropriate support structures⁷, the difficulty of reconciling work/sport and family life and the problem of reintegration into the labour market. The reintegration difficulties experienced by widow Albertina Dias which made headlines in the press are emblematic, after a brilliant career as an athlete, including a world cross-country championship in 1993. She ended up taking a job in a town hall which was the only offer she had corresponding to her skills in the training sector. The decision of this municipality illustrates the opportunities which can be offered to former athletes in order to highlight their competences and put their experience at the service of the local population. It can be considered that, in general, women find it more difficult to reintegrate into the labour market. Studies need to be made and solutions found, including proposals in the area of training and sports promotion.

11. In spite of these difficulties, some women have succeeded in obtaining media attention and gaining international recognition. Some former champions in Portugal have become veritable national icons, among them Aurora Cunha, once the world 10,000 m champion, Manuela Machado, former world 10,000 m and marathon champion, and Rosa Mota, who, as an Olympic marathon champion, was given the ultimate accolade of having a sports house in Oporto named after her. It has to be said, however, that these are women who won individual titles, thanks to their outstanding personal efforts, without much support from their state, or even their clubs. There is no "traditional school" as in other countries, and nobody has taken up where they left off: no Portuguese athletes can now match these three women's achievements.

12. It is, however, important that the fame of these few top-level women athletes should be used to spur girls to get involved in sport and serve as a model for them. As "self-made women", they offer an example of both talent and tenacity, which public authorities and sports bodies should recognise and make use of to instil in young people a love of sport, success and fair play.

Pay and bonuses

13. Discrimination against women is particularly perceptible in the realm of pay. Fourteen of the delegations which replied to the questionnaire said that pay, prize-money and bonuses were awarded by national authorities on the basis of athletes' merits and performances. Yet the rewards granted by the federations themselves, and more particularly those offered by private sponsors (possibly motivated by a need to achieve profitability) are often left out of the statistics. The information supplied by the delegations nevertheless seems to indicate that, with a few notable exceptions, these rewards are far less for women than for men.

14. Top-level female athletes devote both time and energy to their sport. Women marathon runners, for example, do twice as much training as their male counterparts. It is therefore only right for them to be treated as workers, and thus to receive the same pay as male athletes, in accordance with the provisions of Article 4 (3) of the European Social Charter. This does not always happen, however.

15. In marathon running, for example, although women receive the same number of bonuses, and at the same rate, as men in some races⁸, there are still marathons in Council of Europe member states where not only are fewer bonuses paid to women, but the rate at which they are paid is below that awarded to men. Just a few examples are the Lyon marathon, the *L'Humanité* half-marathon and the

⁶ <http://www.icwsf.org/ThirdGames.htm>.

⁷ When asked during an interview for *L'Equipe* (8 June 2004) whether she felt as if she had been abandoned mid-ocean, Marie-Jo Pérec, a triple Olympic gold medalist, replied that, although people might not have that impression, she would have loved the support of a more structured federation.

⁸ Rome marathon (Italy), Marseille half-marathon (France), Istanbul 15 km race (Turkey), Frankfurt marathon (Germany), Valencia marathon (Spain), etc.

Marjevols-Mende race, in France, together with the Turin, Naples and Cesano Boscone marathons in Italy. While it is probably fair to award fewer bonuses to women if fewer women run in the race concerned, there is no justification for those bonuses to be paid at a lower rate.

16. In tennis, Roland Garros and Wimbledon are the only two Grand Slam tournaments not to pay the same prize money to women as to men. Yet tennis remains the sport where women are best paid: the only two women to have won career prize money of 20 million dollars are both tennis players, Steffi Graf and Martina Navratilova.

Sponsors and funding

17. During the five years from 1992 to 1997, the money paid into women's sport by sponsors more than doubled, from 285 million to 600 million dollars. This represents progress, but the figures are still revealing in terms of what remains to be done. The total figure has now gone beyond one billion dollars, but sponsors pay 25 billion dollars a year into men's sport. Yet without serious sponsors or adequate funding, women's sport is not viable, as certain examples clearly show.

18. In the world of football, the Plessis-Robinson football club's women's teams hoped, in May 1998, to move up to the French national championship, but the club itself was against this, on the grounds that it would be too expensive. In practice, all the club's cash subsidies went to the men's team, although this played two divisions below. In the end, the women's teams were dissolved by a decision of the board⁹. When the United States hosted the fourth Women's World Cup, in 2003, its professional women's football league, which had won the World Cup itself in 1999, had to announce that it was dissolving, for lack of sponsors and reliable partners¹⁰. In April 2004, Fulham, an English club, announced that it would cease funding its women's team unless a sponsor could be found by June that year. The team thus ran the risk of a return to amateur status, after three years in the professional league and one year of semi-professional status¹¹.

19. That final example clearly illustrates the hypocrisy which prevails in women's football. The 11 official sponsors of the Women's World Cup paid a total of 44 million dollars, the figure paid by a single company on sponsorship of the men's World Cup.

20. Where inequality in pay and bonuses is concerned, it is for national bodies and the various federations to take action, condemning or penalising such inequality where necessary. In most cases the legislation already exists and just needs to be applied.

C. Ensuring that women are members of sport's ruling bodies

21. Seeing women in key posts in any field may serve as an example to younger generations, particularly in sport, where discrimination is particularly present. What is more, when decisions need to be taken it is always beneficial to view matters from different angles, especially because balanced male and female participation in decision-making makes it easier to satisfy the expectations of the groups for which the decisions are to be taken.

22. Yet only 9.6% of the members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the supreme body of the Olympic movement, are women at the moment (twelve of the 125 total). The IOC had set a target for December 2000 of at least 10% of all decision-taking posts in international federations to be held by women. Only 66% of National Olympic Committees and 43% of international federations achieved this. It remains to be seen whether the target set for December 2005, namely at least 20% of decision-taking posts to be held by women, will be met¹². To judge by the replies submitted by delegations, in 18 of the 25 countries which answered this question less than 20% of the members of executive bodies or National Olympic Committees are women. The measures adopted by the International Olympic Committee, while welcome, are insufficient. For one thing, the IOC's objective is a very modest one, which may not give rise to much of an increase in the numbers of women on National Olympic Committees, and for another thing, the provisions introduced are not binding.

⁹ The club was found guilty of sex discrimination on 18 November 2002 by the *Tribunal de Grande Instance* in Nanterre.

¹⁰ *Le Monde* of 20 September 2003. Women's football no longer draws the crowds in the United States.

¹¹ *The Guardian*, 29 April 2004.

¹² Sources: http://www.olympic.org/uk/organisation/missions/women/leaders_uk.asp.

23. Yet increasing female representation on ruling bodies is one of the keys to a better gender balance in sport. France has found that one result of the inadequate number of female officials in clubs, leagues, committees and federations is inevitably a focus on certain forms of activities in which women and girls are present neither fully nor on a lasting basis, as clubs currently concentrate their activities mainly on men. "Thus the lack of gender balance is self-perpetuating"¹³. Increasing female representation on ruling bodies has thus become a priority: the decree of 7 January 2004 on the approval and constitutions of sports federations provides for compulsory female representation on ruling bodies, with offending bodies liable to be fined. The German sport federation has begun a campaign on the theme "Sport is good for women, women are good for sport", in an effort to encourage women to take part in organised sport and, in particular, to join the ruling bodies of sports organisations at every level. The introduction of quotas for women members of federations' bodies also appears to be effective.

24. The presence of some pioneer women, even if exceptional, in the ruling bodies must however be seen as a factor of cultural change. Their competences are appreciated, but women in ruling bodies remain a minority. In Portugal, this concerns, in the first football league, the Vice-President (in the financial and administrative department) of the FC Porto, champion of Portugal and Europe in 2004, a female member of the Governing board of the SCP (which is a kind of « Senate » composed of prestigious personalities), the Vice-President of the SC Braga (in charge of the volleyball section), a female member of the "General Council" of Boavista, a female manager of the financial department (Gil Vicente), a female director for social communication (Academia of Coimbra), a female director of the training department (Penafiel) and three other women in senior posts, all former amateur soccer players. In the other leagues, some examples are more striking: the club of Valpaçosa is chaired by a woman, the general assemblies of the Sporting of Espinho and Vilanovense are chaired by women, Leixões and Salgueiros have women in their administration team. A woman is vice-President of the "disciplinary board" of the Football Association and another one is also member of this board.¹⁴

25. It is also interesting to note that coaches continue to be mostly male. Yet no women athletes doubt the abilities of female trainers. The German national women's football team was led to victory in the 2003 Women's World Cup by a female coach. Also the team of Sweden, World Vice-Champion and the team of the United States, which came third, were coached by a woman, whereas Canada, fourth, was coached by a man. A study carried out by Everhart and Chelladurai in 1998 shows that women trained by women experience less discrimination and have a greater tendency to become coaches themselves than women who have been coached by men¹⁵.

26. Several factors explain the discrimination suffered by women in this area, the first being the fact that the small number of women in key posts makes them more visible, so more likely to be criticised. Women are also stereotyped as "gentle" and "sensitive", so they are considered more suitable for public relations posts, for example, than leadership roles requiring a combative and intransigent approach. Finally, women are less integrated into the networks essential to developing a career in sport, because there are very few women at the top levels. This list is of course not a comprehensive one, but it does throw up some worthwhile lines to pursue in the attempt to combat this discrimination.

27. Women's participation on ruling bodies thus remains marginal in most Council of Europe member states. It seems that a particular effort needs to be made to get states to progress in this respect. The setting up of international networks may help to promote exchanges of information and good practice, as well as helping to persuade states to take account of the gender dimension in sport policies. The European Women and Sport network is a good illustration of this¹⁶.

D. Improving women's and girls' access to sports activities

Schools' role in the promotion of sport

28. Schools are temples of democracy and ideal places to learn about citizenship and fundamental values. They symbolise equality of opportunities for all. Yet numerous sociological studies have shown that this equality of opportunity is still affected by many factors. The attitude of teachers, in particular, shapes girls' perception of their own abilities.

¹³ Sources: 2003 activity report No 263 (2003-2004), by Ms Gisèle Gautier, on behalf of the Delegation for women's rights and equal opportunities between women and men, report on the Delegation's work on gender balance in present-day France, and French delegation's reply to the questionnaire.

¹⁴ Special edition of *Norte Desportivo* on women sport, 6 November 2004

¹⁵ Study: "The Experience and Meaning of Sport and Exercise in the Lives of Women in Some European Countries" (<http://www.icsspe.org/portal/texte/project/tx2110.html>).

¹⁶ See www.ews-online.org.

29. These studies have shown that girls from the age of six believe boys to be sportier than themselves, and that martial arts or team sports are only for boys. Yet sport plays a valuable role in keeping society together and, where women's status is concerned, it has an emancipatory role, increasing self-awareness and making it possible to take advantage of abilities and potential.

30. Furthermore, research has shown that there is no significant difference between the sexes up to the age of thirteen, the decisive factor being height. An eight-year-old girl would apparently be safer playing with a boy of her own age than with a 12-year-old girl. And there is no basis for the fear that young girls practising a sport intensively develop physically in too masculine a way, for doctors agree that each individual's basic physical characteristics are genetically predetermined.

31. Boys are also discriminated against when they wish to practise what is regarded as a feminine sport, such as dancing, rhythmic gymnastics or synchronised swimming. At the Olympic Games, rhythmic gymnastics and synchronised swimming are for women only. Establishing equality between the sexes in the world of sport also means working to put an end to the clichés which prevent men from freely choosing their favourite sport, and which at the same time prevent them from taking part in international competitions for lack of qualified opponents.

32. When women reach working age, they face new obstacles to sporting activity, first and foremost among these being the difficulty of reconciling motherhood with sport. Indeed, although progress has been made in the sphere of equal opportunities, it is usually women who look after children and carry out household tasks. It is usually up to them to manage and organise childcare if they wish to participate in the sport which is vital to their well-being and their balance. This may help to explain why women's participation in sport may be less visible than that of men: they are more independent, rely less on affiliation to sports bodies, and their participation is therefore underestimated by sports officials¹⁷.

33. Sports activities are organised for families in some countries, including Norway and Finland, but this initiative has not spread very far, with fewer than 10% of all sports clubs providing lessons or organising groups for parents and their children¹⁸.

34. Where the numbers of registered members of sports federations are concerned, the figures are again eloquent. Approximately one-third of all registered members are women, so there are two men for every woman in competitive sports. The female presence is less within the organised structures of sports federations, for women seek exercise more in the context of leisure and keeping in shape, and they need greater freedom when organising their time. They usually participate in sport for health reasons, for pleasure, or even for aesthetic reasons. If women are to be encouraged into sport, they need to be given other reasons, and the obstacles standing in their way need to be removed.

A factor in social cohesion

35. Sport has the social role of integrating people and is a vital factor in social cohesion for young people. The development in sensitive neighbourhoods of new cultural curbs within the community is nevertheless slowly excluding the girls who live there. A study in France revealed that 51% of girls outside educational priority areas (ZEPs) engage in sport, but only 32% within ZEPs¹⁹. The facilities available locally, thanks to significant investment by municipalities and associations, have therefore been of greater benefit to the male population over the past 10 years²⁰. Failure to appreciate girls' expectations, a backward-looking attitude in sporting circles and facilities which do not meet girls' specific needs are among the reasons for this.

36. Education does indeed play a major role in the ideas we have about both sexes. Hence the importance of changing teaching methods. We must stop making girls continue to think that they have physiological limitations, and this means changing teachers' view, for they are persuaded that their attitude is justified, although their view is based on wrong thinking. The first to be educated are therefore teachers, and they in turn must involve girls in the activities often reserved for boys, such as football or martial arts.

¹⁷ Report on women and sport, French Ministry for Youth and Sport, 2004.

¹⁸ Study: "The Experience and Meaning of Sport and Exercise in the Lives of Women in Some European Countries" (<http://www.icsspe.org/portal/texte/project/tx2110.html>).

¹⁹ French Ministry for Youth and Sport, http://www.jeunesse-sports.gouv.fr/sport/sport_feminin.asp

²⁰ Report on women and sport, French Ministry for Youth and Sport, 2004.

37. Where a gender balance is encouraged in sports activities, sport is a way of bringing boys and girls together socially, teaching them to base the lives they share on common rules centred on respect for one another and on fair play. Involvement in sport therefore has to be regarded as a preventive factor against risky behaviour (such as drug abuse), as an integrating factor and as an opportunity to promote gender balance, particularly at school, where physical education lessons must continue to be open to all and to offer activities for boys and girls together. Awareness-raising action should be targeted at families, to ensure that girls take part in sport, wherever they come from. Finally, it is also very important to underline the necessity of providing free access to sports activities, in particular in poor neighbourhoods.

38. At the same time, it is important to underline that all measures must be taken to fight against the unacceptable downhill trends in sport, such as sexual harassment and abuse, racism, doping, or spectator violence, all of which can discourage girls from practising sport.

Sport for both sexes

39. The promotion of sports activities in schools is a vital way of stimulating and promoting participation by girls in such activities. Access to every sporting discipline, irrespective of the child's gender, and the holding of competitions in which pupils take part are vital to spotting talent in boys and girls alike and to affording them the chance to realise their sporting potential and to benefit in terms of their own well-being.

40. Particular attention needs to be paid to handicapped women : conditions need to be created which allow them to practise a sport adapted to their physical condition, and which allow them to take part in competitions, as the numbers are very unfavourable to women in most countries also concerning this particular aspect.

41. Daily physical activity at primary school seems to have a significant long-term positive effect on women's habits where sport is concerned. When the pupils concerned grow up, they are more active. And the benefits of this to public health are not negligible. Physical activity does reduce the risk of strokes, and promotes recovery if a stroke does occur. It significantly reduces the risk of obesity, a risk to which girls between the ages of 16 and 24 are twice as exposed as boys. During the years when the body is developing, sport is more effective than regular consumption of calcium in promoting the densification of bony tissue, and it helps to prevent osteoporosis²¹. In addition, between one and three hours of sport per week reduces the risk of breast cancer by 20 to 30% in women of child-bearing age, while four hours or more bring a risk reduction of almost 60%²².

42. According to an American study involving more than 6 000 women over the age of 65, acquiring the walking habit is enough to provide protection against the decline associated with the ageing of intellectual functions, including memory loss. The risk of cognitive decline decreases by 13% for every 1.6 km of extra walking each week²³. And a second study has revealed that post-menopausal women taking regular physical exercise enjoy a far more satisfactory sex life than those not exercising regularly²⁴.

43. Pending a change in mentalities, it is important to change the prevailing conditions so that working women who participate in sport as a leisure activity are able harmoniously to fit in physical activity. The Nordic countries have set an excellent theoretical and practical example in this respect. It is also vital to promote sport among older women, in view of the undeniable benefits which both they themselves and society as a whole can derive from this. One step in this direction could be an information campaign highlighting the existence of an "Olympics" for older people (the most recent games took place in Belgium in April 2003).

E. Improving women's image in the media

44. It is widely accepted that the media shape mentalities and representations. This being generally true, it also applies to sport, particularly women's sport. People's knowledge or opinion of women's sport and their attitude to it depend almost exclusively on the media, except among people who themselves participate in sport.

²¹ National Osteoporosis Society, 2002.

²² Journal of the National Cancer Institute, 1994.

²³ Sources: Covinsky, Yaffe and colleagues, University of San Francisco, 53rd Congress of the American Academy of Neurology, Philadelphia, May 2001.

²⁴ Sources: Gerber et al. A longitudinal study of the effects of free testosterone and other psychosocial variables upon sexual functioning during the natural traverse of menopause. ASRM, 2003, San Antonio, Texas, USA.

45. In this context, it is therefore worth noting that the coverage of women's sport on British television, for instance, ranges from just 0.5% to 6% of all sports coverage²⁵. In daily newspapers, as well, female athletes are confined to a very small proportion of the sports pages, most frequently in the context of scandals or team funding difficulties²⁶. The figures relating to media coverage of women's sports activities reveal a lack of interest in female sport: the year 1999 saw 850 hours of (male) football and rugby coverage in France, as compared to 30 hours of gymnastics and ice dancing. In Finland, 13% of sports news broadcasting was given over to women's sports in 1999, leading the equality ombudsperson to recommend more balanced media coverage of male and female sport. Popularity ratings are often used to justify the male focus, especially by private media companies. It is also clear that women are underrepresented in journalism, photography and sports reporting or newsreading. The information or estimates given to me show that under 10% of sports journalists in 13 out of 21 countries are women.

46. Not only is there a failure to acknowledge women's performances in the world of sport, but the attitude adopted by the media jeopardises women's actual image. When athletes' names are mentioned, they are usually described as pretty and sexy young women, rather than professional sportswomen of skill, power and stamina. Photographed wearing their swimsuits, rather than their official team uniform, their interviews tend to focus on their marriage more than their world records. Their status in sport is denied by the media, and they are treated as fashion icons or representatives of family values, in the best cases, rather than as athletes. In the worst cases, they are reduced to the status of a sex object, or their names are quoted in the context of a drugs scandal involving their husband²⁷.

47. And it is possible that showing women athletes in this light enables the media to reassure both the public and their sponsors. They do show young women as pure heterosexual "products", for the old cliché of the sportswoman as stocky, masculine, ugly and, in particular, lesbian, endures, and remains a daunting one²⁸.

48. Proactive measures seem necessary to increase media awareness of the need to put across a different image of sportswomen. The media are the main sources of information and help to shape public opinion. The example set by the Australian Sports Commission is highly instructive in this respect: the ASC prepared a media information package on the present-day implications of women's sport, which it distributed to journalists in Australia early in 2000. Included in the package were reports on sensitive subjects, lists of contact persons, and so on. It was very well received, and had highly positive effects, journalists making use of it on many subsequent occasions²⁹.

F. Promoting effective measures to combat discrimination in the area of sports activities

49. The combating of discrimination against women and girls in sports activities requires a determined policy and practical measures. It is not enough to cite the egalitarian or non-discriminatory nature of national policies for sport. There is a need to detect the hidden inegalitarian effects of certain measures.

50. Yet few states have introduced strong incentives to include the gender dimension in respect of resource allocation. Andorra does include gender as a criterion for the allocation of subsidies. Austria has set up a women's support fund enabling 45% of the funds granted for amateur sport to be spent on women's sport (had the fund not been set up, the figure would have been only 22%). France has taken some measures accompanied by financial penalties with a view to increasing female representation on ruling bodies (see above) and offers specific financial assistance for sports federations' schemes designed, for instance, to improve the conditions for participation in top-level sport or to take further specific research into women's performance³⁰. Hungary grants assistance to events in which 70% of the participants are women. The Netherlands subsidises a few specific projects intended to increase women's participation in ruling bodies. The United Kingdom has identified women and girls as a priority group and, when grants are applied for, considers what encouragement is being given to participation by priority groups. The UK also gives support to an NGO called the Women's Sports Foundation which promotes opportunities in sport for women and girls.

²⁵ Source: Sports Council, 1993.

²⁶ Press survey of daily newspapers (The Guardian, International Herald Tribune, *Le Monde* and *Libération*) conducted between 24 and 29 April 2004.

²⁷ International Herald Tribune, 29 April 2004, No. 37679.

²⁸ Cf Recommendation 1635 (2003) on lesbians and gays in sport, as well as the opinion issued by the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (doc. 10001).

²⁹ http://www.canada2002.org/e/progress/progress/chapter2_6.htm.

³⁰ French Ministry for Youth and Sport, http://www.jeunesse-sports.gouv.fr/sport/sport_feminin.asp.

51. There is a particular need, initially, to concentrate public action on participation in the most popular sports, those involving mass participation and gaining the widest media coverage. Efforts should be made in particular to promote women's football, although female participation in every sporting discipline also deserves encouragement. The world of football is, in fact, very much a male preserve, more so than politics, sociocultural activities and even economics and finance. This is where the fight for equality between women and men in the world of sport can be won. It is also important to underline the role of women in attenuating the violent image of certain sports traditionally practised by men, as well as the positive effect their presence in great numbers at sport events has on spectator violence.

52. Some encouraging examples give reason for hope. In Turkey, many women practise "combat sports" (judo, karate, boxing). In Romania, the world champions of canoe-kayaking are extremely popular. The sport of "futsal" (indoor football) is enjoying increasing success in Portugal, particularly at school level (there are now 1 356 teams), although there is no real support for it or policy on it among public authorities or clubs. In the United Kingdom, football is now the mass sport in which women participate most. It has the support of the Football Foundation, which has paid out £ 1.6 million for women's and girls' football projects. This is the country where the 2005 European women's football championships are to take place, from 5 to 19 June 2005, an event which will afford an excellent opportunity to publicise this sport.

53. The principles of gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting have now been adopted by just a few countries (Finland, Denmark) in the sporting sphere. As a result, public policies promoting women's participation in sport can have a real impact³¹. These principles ought also to be put into practice by local authorities, which have a great role to play in providing services and support to the sports activities laid on in municipalities and in promoting the integrated approach³².

G. Conclusions

54. The distressing findings of a few years ago have now given way to a more reassuring situation. Yet there are many matters still requiring improvement. Ruling bodies must become more aware of the - frequently hidden - discrimination to which women are subjected in sports activities, and against which practical measures need to be taken, such as the combating of stereotypes attached to women's image, the strengthening of women's position on sport's ruling bodies, the setting up of networks of women officials and the strengthening of the back-up structures for women's sport.

55. The achievement of equality between women and men in sports activities will require the definition of standards and activities which truly enable mentalities and practices to be changed. It is in this field that the Council of Europe can fully play its role in the promotion of equality between women and men.

56. This is why the Parliamentary Assembly should call on the Committee of Ministers to:

i. instruct the competent intergovernmental Committee to make an in-depth study of national sport policies and their impact on women's and girls' participation in sports activities and work out a European Strategy for Women and Sport, which should ensure :

- a. that physical education is accorded more importance in school, and that women and girls are encouraged to take part in sport from their schooldays onwards, while respecting the principle of co-education;
- b. that the responsible officials in the departments of sport, education and health are implicated in awareness-raising and information campaigns on the necessity of practising sport, in particular for women of all ages, including handicapped women;
- c. that gender is taken into consideration in the definition of public action to promote sport (gender mainstreaming) and in the allocation of funds intended for sports activities (gender budgeting);
- d. that violence, racism, sexual harassment and abuse, as well as doping are fought against in sport and amongst spectators;

³¹ Also see "A New Strategy: Gender Mainstreaming", document presented by Teresa Rees to the 5th European Women and Sport Conference, Berlin, 2002, <http://www.bso.or.at/download/572/gem.pdf>.

³² See the Final Declaration of the European Conference on Sport and Local Authorities (Gödöllo, 1-3 February 1996), Recommendation 16 (1996) and Resolution 27 (1996) on sport and local authorities, and Resolution 176 (2004) on gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

- e. that action is taken to promote women's sport, particularly in respect of highly popular sports;
 - f. support for women's participation in top-level sport;
 - g. equal treatment for women and men in terms of pay, prize-money and bonuses derived from professional sport;
 - h. that women play a greater part in sport's ruling bodies;
 - i. that gender-specific statistics are collected relating to the granting of funds and the practice of sport, enabling the impact on women and men of sport promotion policies to be gauged;
 - j. increased media coverage of the sports played by women and athlete representation more in conformity with the spirit of sport;
- ii. organise a European ministerial conference to launch this Strategy.

* * *

Reporting committee: Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men.

Reference to Committee: Doc 9864, reference N° 2860 of 8 September 2003.

Draft recommendation unanimously adopted by the Committee on 28 February 2005.

Members of the Committee: Mrs Minodora **Cliveti** (Chairperson), Mrs Rosmarie Zapfl-Helbling (1st Vice-Chairperson, alternate: Mrs Ruth-Gaby **Vermot-Mangold**), Mr Per Dalgaard (2nd Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Anna **Curdova** (3rd Vice-Chairperson), Mrs Manuela **Aguiar**, Mrs Edita Angyalova, Mr John Austin, Mr Oleksiy **Baburin**, Mr Denis Badré, Mrs Gülsün **Bilgehan**, Mr Brendan **Daly**, Mrs Krystyna Doktorowicz, Mrs Lydie **Err**, Mrs Catherine Fautrier, Mrs Maria Emelina **Fernández Soriano**, Mr George **Foulkes**, Mr Giuseppe **Gaburro**, Mr Pierre Goldberg, Ms Gultakin Hadjiyeva, Mrs Carina Hägg, Mrs Eleonora Katseli, Mrs Synnove Konglevoll, Mrs Monika Kryemadhi, Mrs Minna Lintonen, Mrs Danguté Mikutiene (alternate: Mrs Biruté **Vésaité**), Mrs Fausta Morganti, Mrs Hermine Naghdalyan, Mr Hilmo Neimarlija, Mrs Vera **Oskina**, Mrs Patrizia Paoletti Tangheroni (alternate: Mr Gianpietro **Scherini**), Ms Riorita Patereu, Mrs Fatma Pehlivan (alternate: Ms Mimount **Bousakla**), Mrs Antigoni Pericleous-Papadopoulos, Mr Leo Platvoet, Mrs Majda **Potrata**, Mr Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando, Ms Valentina Radulović-Šćepanović, Mrs Claudia Roth, Mrs Marlene **Rupprecht**, Mr Össur Skarphéðinsson, Mrs Svetlana Smirnova, Mrs Darinka **Stantcheva**, Ms Agnes Vadai, Mrs Gisela **Wurm**, Mr Andrej Zernovski.

N.B. The names of the members who took part in the meeting are printed **in bold**.

Secretaries of the Committee: Mrs Kleinsorge, Mrs Affholder, Ms Devaux